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Edina City Council Members: Mayor James Hovland, Joni Bennett, Mary Brindle, Scot Housh, Ann Swenson

We have lived in Edina for over 18 years and if implemented, stand to be directly affected by the proposed Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail. We would like to express our concern with the proposed bike path along Nine Mile Creek in Edina. The issues below apply to property along Nine Mile Creek generally, but we would like also to address specifically the section along Valley Lane, Hillside Lane, and Creek Drive as we have first hand knowledge about this area. The following are the issues we would like to bring to your attention:

Do the Residents of Edina really want this path? Edina has a population of approximately 47,425 yet we are very unclear how a survey of less than 10% of our population with a **response of less than 2% of our city's population (865 responses)** somehow represents a definitive desire that our community wants this path. We also question what wording was included in this survey. "Would you like to see more bike/walking trails in Edina" hardly notifies those asked that such a trail would run through their streets, backyards, schoolyards, and endanger the beauty of our Creek and Wetlands. Council Members and The Watershed District have veiled the presentation of the path to the public under a council agenda of "water quality projects". How any constituent reading the council agenda would know this to be actual plans for a bike trail is unknown to us, and a clear breach of public trust and also of the offices held by each of you.

Wetlands, Animal Habitat and Environment – Edina does not have an overabundance of natural areas – especially wetlands. In the area along the Creek behind Valley Lane the wetlands host Owls, Egrets, Fox, Loons, returning families of Wood Ducks, Deer, and countless species of birds that continue to thrive in this setting. It is difficult to imagine any of these habitats thriving by paving a thoroughfare for biking along the Creek. Pollution feeding the creek including road salt, fertilizer, and trash continue to be issues we struggle with while trying to keep the Creek healthy. In the paper this week there are concerns about road salt finding its way into 9 Mile Creek already found to be well above safe levels for wildlife. It is difficult to envision a solution providing the same protection of the Creek after a 16' wide path is added (10 feet for paved path & 3 feet on each side for "shoulder"). Since the Nine Mile Creek area is already rather narrow adding this path would mean that this amazing wildlife would no longer be able travel freely up and down the Creek because of the increased usage. We would like to see the environmental impact study for this project.

9 Mile Creek Watershed/Flooding – this area of the Creek often overflows the banks and floods into the yards of the neighboring homes. In our yard alone after a day of heavy rainfall the creek floods into our yard by more than 30 feet. If this path is to have 24 x 7 access, we assume the path would have to be built up above the yearly flood level. It is hard to see how a path could be built up three to four feet above the existing grade and allow for proper drainage and still be environmentally friendly, or aesthetically pleasing.

Safety – Many areas of Nine Mile Creek are secluded and relatively remote. On Valley Lane - particularly in the front of our homes, traffic is heavy and known to be an off freeway thoroughfare when traffic is heavy on Highway 62. Many of us choose to send our children to the safety of the back yard for play. If a path is built along the Creek that allows for biking, walking, during any hour of the day or night, we question the safety for homes and children at play that remain close (within 100 feet specifically) to the Creek boundaries. We understand that this path will be lit but we wonder about police supervision as it can be far from any street they currently patrol. In some areas homes are fairly close to the creek, under 100', this could be a concern. We also question the proximity to our schools - the proposed path will

connect to the Three Rivers Park District's regional trail network, which currently has more than 90 miles of trail. This brings a large number of people each day into close proximity to our schools creating a safety concern for many of us who have children attending those schools. Current mapping of connectivity to the Hopkins bike trail connects us directly with a level three sex offender living near the path as of one week ago.

Budget and Priorities – Today's current financial climate hardly seems the appropriate time to be spending precious financial resources. The State budget deficit stands at more than \$4.27 billion - much of that affecting our schools. Both Valley View Middle School and The Edina High School have called special meetings to discuss with the public the effects that budget cutbacks will be having on the education of our children. The construction and ongoing maintenance of a bike trail does not fall into an "absolute necessity" category as we face difficult financial and budgetary choices. It is extremely difficult to hear as constituents of Edina that we have unknowingly funded money to The Three Rivers Park District for a project that if completed we will be responsible as taxpayers to continue and sustain the upkeep of.

This is a project that clearly jeopardizes the environment of one of the most beautiful wildlife areas we host in Edina, and stands to change directly both the people and wildlife along its path. We look forward to hearing you comments and solutions to each of these issues.

Sincerely,

Harvey & Pam Johnson